

Rural Crime Survey – Final Results

Background

On 22nd February 2021 the Tees Rural Crime Forum launched an online survey aimed at Cleveland’s rural communities. The focus of the survey was on better understanding community safety concerns in rural areas and how the police and community safety partners could improve the service they deliver to rural communities. It is planned to repeat the survey on a six monthly basis to track community concerns and confidence. The survey ran from 22nd February to 13th April.

Demographics

123 respondents completed the survey. Over three quarters of respondents (76.5%) were rural community residents, with landowners and business owners making up the rest of the respondents.

Almost half the respondents (46%) were from the Redcar & Cleveland area, followed by Stockton (41%), Hartlepool (6.5%) and Middlesbrough (6.5%).

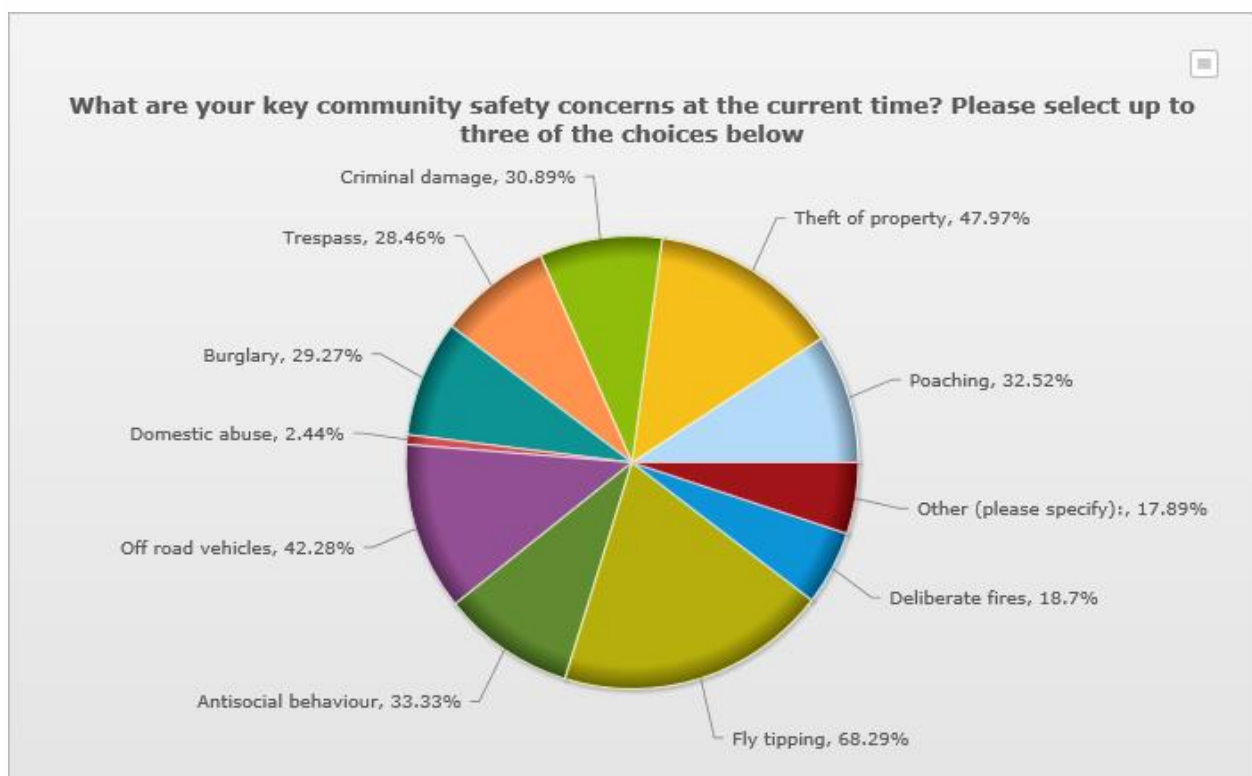
Key Concerns

The top five community safety concerns raised by respondents were:

- Fly tipping (68%)
- Theft of property (48%)
- Off road vehicles (42%)
- Antisocial behaviour (33%)
- Poaching (32.5%)

Speeding, and inconsiderate and illegal parking were the main concerns mentioned in the Other section of this question.

The chart below shows the full range of responses received:



Service Improvement

Respondents were asked how they felt that the police and community safety partners could improve the way they served the rural community. This was a free text question to allow a full range of responses.

By far the most frequent response was an increased visible police presence in rural areas. Several respondents commented that when the police are seen they are in cars and it would increase community confidence if they got out of their cars and patrolled on foot.

More robust enforcement was also mentioned frequently with several respondents stating that rural community members didn't feel it was worth reporting incidents due to a perception that the police and community safety partners did not take appropriate enforcement action.

A quicker response was also mentioned by many, with several respondents noting the vulnerability of farmers reporting from remote rural areas and the frustration at the length of time it takes for first responders to arrive.

Improved communication and feedback after incidents was also a popular choice. Suggestions for communications included attendance at community meetings, when covid restrictions allow, and information in community newsletters. Most respondents did not seem to be aware of the recently introduced ward newsletters so linking Rural Watch members into the newsletters could be a positive step. For longer term engagement and communication it was felt that a dedicated Single Point of Contact for rural issues would be beneficial to help build relationships and trust. There is a dedicated Rural Crime Prevention Officer and Rural Engagement Officer who will undertake this as face to face engagement becomes possible again.

Several respondents felt that a dedicated phone number for reporting rural incidents would be beneficial as there was a perception that 101 Control Room call takers did not understand rural crime and appreciate the impact on victims.

Respondents were next asked what they would want from the police and community safety partners in an ideal world. Again this was a free text question to allow a full range of responses.

The responses were very much the same as the previous question, namely:

- More visible presence
- More robust enforcement
- Better communication and follow up
- Dedicated number and Single Point of Contact for rural issues
- Quicker response when reporting incidents

Other suggestions were improved partnership working and a reinvigoration of the Farm Watch scheme.

The final question allowed any final free text comments. There was a lot of support for the police and partners in this section, with recognition of the challenges faced with budgets and staffing numbers.

The recently introduced ward newsletters were seen as a positive step. Suggested areas for development were more education around the impact of rural crime with front line staff and reinvigorating Rural Watch.